Reflection on Graduation Process

In the foreword of my graduation report I highlighted that the perspective of the user was one of the main motivations for me to choose this research topic. Besides this I was very interested in the course of Housing Policy, Management and Sustainability. I especially found possibilities in new forms and types of (developing) housing exciting and interesting and wanted to learn more on these. I also wanted to research something that was to do with a current topic or problem in society. Therefore I chose the topic of CPC and affordable private rental housing.

Because this study was on a type of development that is not realised yet, there was not a completed project to analyse. This meant that the study was explorative and there were no hard facts, only opinions of parties based on previous projects that did not comply with all the requirements, previous projects that failed or on-going projects that they are currently involved in. Hence, there was not one truth and nobody could tell me exactly how it should go. This was both very interesting and very confusing at times. Trying to find an appropriate theoretical framework to connect the findings was also difficult.

At times, I struggled to find the focus again in all these opinions and suggestions, also because the interviews did not always proceeded in the way I wanted them to go. Often interviewees steered the conversation into another direction, gave off-topic information and did not give totally complete answers to the questions. This made processing the findings more complicated as it was harder to identify concepts in literature. I do not know directly how I would improve this, but I expect this can be improved by gaining more experience in interviews. I would also perhaps change the sequence of interviews and start with all the case study interviews, which I would then compliment with the cross-sectional interviews. This was more disorganised in practice, also due to the busy schedules of the interviewees. In addition, I have spent a lot of time on processing all the findings from the interviews. This is something I have underestimated beforehand.

I learned more about the research topic during the process, which also led to a shift in the research from focussing on only the user to focussing more on the collaboration in general. This was because there was no end-user in a finished project to interview yet, except for the case study, which was a very different situation. This was a bit disappointing for me, as I find the perspective of the user most interesting.

If I were given the opportunity to do a research in the future, I would structure the process more as a whole. I would try to find a research focus and aim earlier in the process and think of the consequences of this focus and aim for the methodology earlier on as well. This was something I struggled with in the phase towards P2. Although eventually I found a focus, some things could have been better thought out, for example the choice of the case study. It would probably have been better to spend more time in finding a suitable case study. If I would choose for an explorative study again, I would look into previous research more to learn better how to conduct this. Besides, I would write down my steps, for instance with a type of log to keep track of the process as a whole.

I have learned a lot throughout the year about my topic, but also about study design. This was (unexpectedly) a very complicated part of my graduation process. It was a struggle at times, but altogether, it was certainly the most enjoyable and educational part of my study career.